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AFTER THE WAR

BY MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM HARDING CARTER, U.S.A.

OUR participation in the great world war is our first experience as a nation-in-arms. Local interest has played its accustomed part, but as a nation we have been equally interested in each and every man. Altogether we have looked upon our men-at-arms as the army of the United States and our pride of performance goes out to them as a whole.

Confronted with the appalling results of our long continued neglect of the most primary elements of preparedness, it was to be expected that there would be a creaking of the old and a failure to function of hastily created new machinery. But at last we arrived and when the fatal blow that turned the heads of German columns toward Berlin instead of Paris was administered, 2,000,000 American soldiers were at hand to make good Pershing's historic message, "We are here, Lafayette."

During the years of weary waiting of those who had placed high upon the scroll of honor the imperishable words, "The Hun shall not pass," they had indulged the hope of America's entrance in the war. In the cold archives of state there will be found nothing to indicate the gratitude of Americans at the coming of the long deferred opportunity to give practical recognition of our debt to France for her services in the dark hours of our struggle for independence.

Had our participation in the war been based upon sentiment our troops should have arrived in France in 1914. It was providential that we delayed while public opinion was crystalizing, for no one familiar with conditions would presume to say that the draft act could have been passed at an earlier date. We never could have accomplished anything worth while to the Allies under the old volunteer system.

The keystone of the arch of the modern army is found in the General Staff, upon whose studies the strategic com-

binations essential to the execution of the war policies of the nation are based. The calculations of a properly organized general staff take cognizance of all the human and material elements embraced in plans of campaign, leaving nothing to chance, to hope or to the tapestry of dreams. The whole effort is concentrated on utilizing the services of those called to the colors to the best advantage. The demands upon the mental and physical endurance of those engaged in the field or in council are very severe. Strong men break under the strain and are promptly replaced by those able to carry forward the duties of the hour. Demotions in rank have prevailed in a manner and to a degree to shock the sensibilities of those accustomed to the orderly procedure of seniority rule. In the great struggle for untrammelled existence on the part of the highly civilized nations of the modern world the interests of individuals count for nothing except as they merge in the common purpose to win victory.

It was humanly impossible for any general staff to overcome all the evil results of our former neglect, but the nation has cause for congratulation that its military business has been so conducted that once the transfer of our armies across the ocean began, the movement has continued with a regularity and precision which enabled the commander of all the Allied forces to count with certainty upon the amount and character of American support to be given under his great plans for defeating the strong, highly organized and courageous enemy.

The crumbling foundations of the far reaching and deep-laid scheme of world domination announce in unmistakable manner the completeness of the end. The wide spread area over which battle has raged, and the infinite questions that will arise in the final settlement of peace, warn us to begin the preparations for demobilizing our great army in such manner as to best fulfill our duty as one of the victorious Allies. The nation has no military policy separate and distinct from its political policies. Until fifteen years ago when the General Staff was created for the American army, practically all our action on military matters was based on the expediency of the moment. If we do not improve on that line of action in this crisis complications will arise which will clamor for adjustment throughout the lives of the youngest of this generation.

To delay preparing plans for demobilizing the war army

until the moment of departure on the homeward voyage would be most unwise. More than two million young men of our best and bravest citizenship will want accurate knowledge as to the intentions of the Government, in so far as they affect their future, and they are entitled to the information at the earliest possible moment once a treaty of peace has been agreed upon.

To the experienced military man the important thing of first consideration would be to determine the character and strength of the army to be retained in peace. It is unbelievable that with the experience of this great war we shall continue the provisions of the so-called National Defense Act of 1916, or that the States will continue the futile effort to maintain the National Guard organizations unless each and every State shall be required to support its proper proportion of the whole. It seems certain that if war should come again during the lives of this generation there will be no hesitation as to the propriety of raising armies by the selective draft system. A volunteer regular army or National Guard will no longer be in harmony with the system of raising our war armies. The question as to abandonment of the volunteer system of recruitment of whatever forces are to be maintained is one deserving immediate study. If the regular army is regarded as a training school wherein young men may be prepared to render military service, and at the same time trained for a return to civil life, all reasonable objections to the system should disappear. If the old methods of recruitment are to prevail then the Regular Army should be completely reorganized before the demobilization of the greater war army is carried out.

There will be some who will revert to type as soon as peace terms have been agreed upon, and rostrums will resound with the sweet songs of banished wars. Whether we shall wish it or not, our place in the sun has been found for us, and the nation can no more avoid its duties as a world Power than the planets can travel without their own orbits. If we are to continue to interfere in the affairs of smaller nations, if we are to go forth once more upon the seas to win back our long lost commerce, then our common sense alone should warn us that our best intentions will not avail to guard us from crossing the paths of other nations. In the meantime the nation is confronted with problems of peace at home of such magnitude as to test the political ability of our best

trained public men. If we shall weather the storms involved in the reorganization of our whole industrial and agricultural life we may then undertake to master the infinite problems of modern trade. Until we have successfully achieved the demobilization of our war army and navy and restored the vast aggregation of human energy to other fields of activity we may well hold the solution of other problems in abeyance.

For many years after the close of the American Revolution practically every office from toll-gate keeper to President was held by a veteran of that conflict. The present generation knows full well that similar conditions prevailed after the Civil War, and there can be no doubt as to the influence on American life which will be exercised by the several million young men called to serve in the world's greatest war. Some will come back maimed and sorely wounded, but the greater body of them will come home improved mentally, morally and physically by their service. It is not the custom for American military men to demand accounting except through their individual ballots, but it is certain that those who foresee and solve correctly the problems of demobilization and of the home coming of our youthful veterans will merit and receive the full measure of their confidence. The returning veterans represent all elements of our national life. For a time, to them, the world will comprise only two classes, those who have been over there and those who have not, and if their influence is ever capitalized for political purposes it will be along those lines.

The nation now understands how important a part the American General Staff has played in creating, training and placing in the theater of operations the many elements comprising our army of upwards of two million men. Common sense and business instincts should now suggest the wisdom of confiding to the General Staff the preparation of all details concerning the organization of our new regular army, to be maintained in peace, and the demobilization of the great forces engaged for the duration of the war. The strength of the army to be maintained in peace and the manner of its recruitment are matters of national policy. Those elements once determined, the work of the General Staff becomes one of apportionment and detail, based upon our war experience and the normal employment of the army in peace.

WILLIAM HARDING CARTER.